

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
White River Field Office
220 E Market St
Meeker, CO 81641

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION

NUMBER: DOI-BLM-CO-N05-2014-0125-CX

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER: COC0118327-01

PROJECT NAME: Natural Soda Inc. Power Line to Water Well WSW-4

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Sixth Principal Meridian
T 1S, R 98 W
Section 25 Lot 4

APPLICANT: Natural Soda Inc.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION:

Background/Introduction: Natural Soda Inc. (NSI) operates an in-situ sodium bicarbonate (nahcolite) solution mining operation which has been in continual operations since 1991. Their operation and facilities are located at the termination of Rio Blanco County (RBC) Road 31 (see Figures 1 and 2) in the Piceance Creek Basin, approximately 37 miles west and south of Meeker, Colorado. NSI current mining operations involve solution mining from five available mining well pairs. A plant expansion completed in spring of 2013 was designed to increase plant capacity from 125,000 tons per year to 250,000 tons per year. Production for 2014 is projected at approximately 180,000 tons and is anticipated to increase to the new plant capacity within the next two years. Two new water supply wells, WSW-3 and WSW-4, were drilled in summer of 2014.

Proposed Action: NSI proposes to add a power line to the newly constructed water supply well WSW-4 (See Figures 1 and 2). The line would run from a WREA approved power line ROW COC76448 and would be used to power the WSW-4 submersible pump. This would involve the placement of one new pole on the pad area of WSW-4 and approximately 200 feet of overhead power line from the nearest pole of the approved power line ROW COC76448. No new surface disturbance would be associated with the installation.

Construction of the power line is anticipated to occur fall of 2014 and would require one to two days for project completion. Construction, monitoring, reclamation, and maintenance activities for NSI's facilities and well field are governed by NSI's approved mine plan.

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW: The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with (43 CFR 1610.5-3, BLM 1601.08) the following plan:

Name of Plan: White River Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (ROD/RMP).

Date Approved: July 1, 1997

Decision Number/Page: Page 2-6 and 2-7

Decision Language: "Facilitate the orderly and environmentally sound development of sodium resources occurring on public lands."

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION REVIEW: The Proposed Action qualifies as a categorical exclusion under 516 DM 11.9, Number F-8: "*Approval of minor modifications to or minor variances from activities described in an approved underground or surface mine plan for leasable minerals (e.g., change in mining sequence or timing).*"

The Proposed Action has been reviewed with the list of extraordinary circumstances (43 CFR 46.215) described in the table below.

Extraordinary Circumstance	YES	NO
a) Have significant adverse effects on public health and safety.		X
b) Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation, or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands; floodplains; national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.		X
c) Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources.		X
d) Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.		X
e) Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.		X
f) Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.		X
g) Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, in the National Register of Historic Places as determined by the bureau.		X
h) Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have adverse effects on designated Critical Habitat for these species.		X
i) Violate a Federal law, or a State, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.		X

Extraordinary Circumstance	YES	NO
j) Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations.		X
k) Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites.		X
l) Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species.		X

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

The Proposed Action was presented to, and reviewed by, the White River Field Office interdisciplinary team on 9/9/2014. A complete list of resource specialists who participated in this review is available upon request from the White River Field Office. The table below lists resource specialists who provided additional remarks concerning cultural resources and special status species.

Name	Title	Resource	Date
Michael Selle	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources, Native American Religious Concerns	9/23/2014
Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Special Status Wildlife Species	9/18/2014
Justina Thorsen	Ecologist	Special Status Plant Species	9/9/2014

REMARKS:

Cultural Resources: The proposed power line location is within an area that has been inventoried at the Class III (100 percent pedestrian) level (Conner *et al* 2014, Davenport *et al* 2014) with no cultural resources identified within the project area.

Native American Religious Concerns: No Native American Religious Concerns are known in the area, and none have been noted by Northern Ute Tribal authorities. Should recommended inventories or future consultations with Tribal authorities reveal the existence of such sensitive properties, appropriate mitigation and/or protection measures may be undertaken.

Paleontological Resources: The proposed project is located in an area generally mapped as the Uinta Formation (Tweto 1979) which the BLM has categorized as a Potential Fossil Yield Classification (PFYC) 5 formation indicating that it is known to produce scientifically noteworthy fossil resources (c. Armstrong and Wolny 1989).

Threatened and Endangered Wildlife Species: The Proposed Action is encompassed by big game severe winter range, but this brief activity would be located immediately adjacent to access

associated with active oil and gas development and would require no surface disturbance outside that authorized for drilling the water well. The new power pole and associated hardware would, however, pose an electrocution hazard to raptors and other large perching birds and the applicant would be required to employ construction techniques that minimize that risk (see mitigation below).

Special Status Plant Species: The Proposed Action lies within potential habitat for the federally threatened species Dudley Bluffs twinpod and Dudley Bluffs bladderpod. Botanical surveys were conducted in the area by WestWater Engineering in 2013 and by Rusty Roberts in 2014. No special status plants were observed in the aforementioned surveys or are known to occur in the project area. There are no special status plant species issues or concerns associated with the Proposed Action.

REFERENCES CITED:

Armstrong, Harley J., and David G Wolny

- 1989 Paleontological Resources of Northwest Colorado: A Regional Analysis. Museum of Western Colorado, Grand Junction, Colorado

Conner, Carl E., Barbara Davenport and Hannah Mills

- 2014 Class III Cultural Resource Inventory Report for the Proposed RGU #11-26-198 Well Location and Related Linear Route in Rio Blanco County, Colorado for WPX Energy Rocky Mountain, LLC. Grand River Institute, Grand Junction, Colorado. (14-11-03: OAH # RB.LM.R1371)

Davenport, Barbara, Courtney Groff, Natalie Higginson, Dakota Kramer, and Hanna Mills

- 2014 Class III Cultural Resources Inventory Report for the Proposed Resource Development Program, Water Supply, and Production Wells in Rio Blanco County, Colorado, for Natural Soda Inc. Grand River Institute, Grand Junction, Colorado. (14-11-04: OAH # RB.LM.R1370)

Tweto, Ogden

- 1979 Geologic Map of Colorado. United States Geologic Survey, Department of the Interior, Reston, Virginia/

MITIGATION:

1. Power lines shall be constructed in accordance with most current avian protection standards, for example, those designs presented in "Suggested Practices for Avian Protection on Power Lines, The State of the Art in 2006", Avian Power Line Interaction Committee, Edison Electric Institute and California Energy Commission (2006) (www.aplic.org). The holder shall assume the burden and expense of proving that pole designs deviating from those shown in the above publication provide effective electrocution and line-strike protection for birds. Such proof shall be provided by a subject-matter expert approved by the AO. The BLM reserves the right to require modifications or additions to all power line structures placed on this ROW, should they be necessary to ensure the safety of large birds. Such modifications and/or additions shall be made by the holder without liability or expense to the United States.

2. All activities shall comply with the approved "Natural Soda 2010 Mine Plan and Environmental Monitoring Plan".

COMPLIANCE PLAN: "Natural Soda 2010 Mine Plan and Environmental Monitoring Plan"

NAME OF PREPARER: Paul Daggett

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: Heather Sauls

COMPLIANCE WITH NEPA

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 516 DM 11.9, Number F-8. This categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment. The Proposed Action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 43 CFR 46.215 apply.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:



Field Manager

DATE SIGNED: 10/09/2014

ATTACHMENTS:

Figure 1: General Location Map – Topographic

Figure 2: General Location Map – Aerial Photo

Figure 1: General Location Map – Topographic

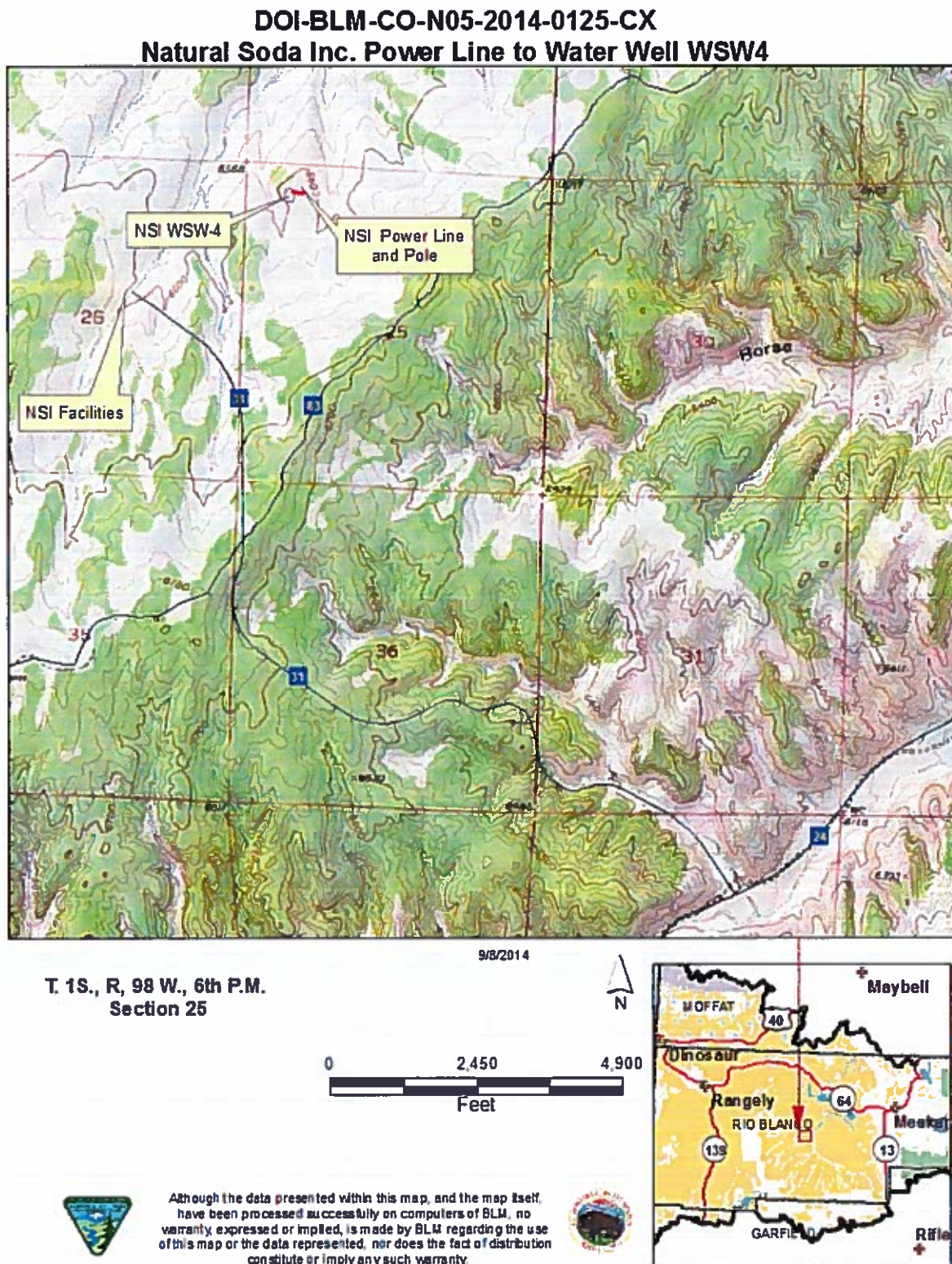
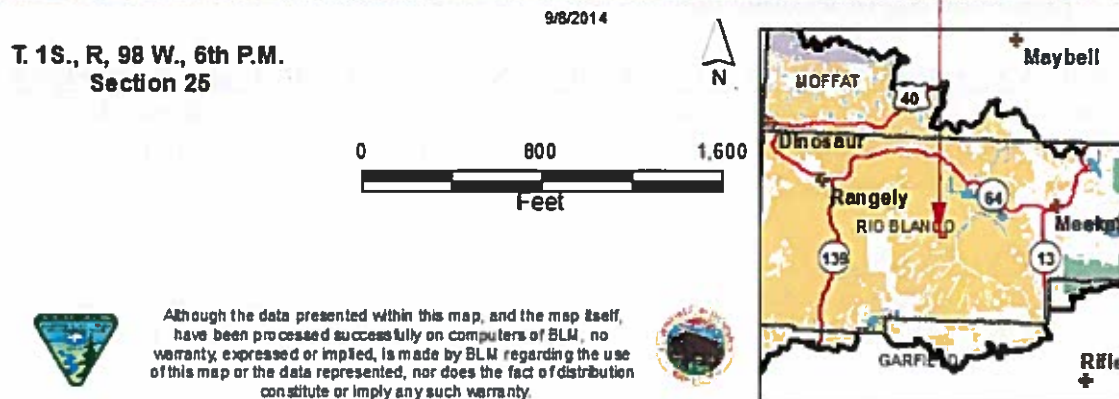


Figure 2: General Location Map – Aerial Photo

DOI-BLM-CO-N05-2014-0125-CX
Natural Soda Inc. Power Line to Water Well WSW4



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DECISION RECORD

PROJECT NAME: Natural Soda Inc. Power Line to Water Well WSW-4

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION NUMBER: DOI-BLM-CO-N05-2014-0125-CX

DECISION

It is my decision to implement the Proposed Action, as mitigated in DOI-BLM-CO-N05-2014-0125-CX, authorizing the construction, operation, and maintenance of a power pole and approximately 200 feet of power line from a power pole along an approved power line to the proposed power pole on the WSW-4 pad.

Mitigation Measures

1. Power lines shall be constructed in accordance with most current avian protection standards, for example, those designs presented in "Suggested Practices for Avian Protection on Power Lines, The State of the Art in 2006", Avian Power Line Interaction Committee, Edison Electric Institute and California Energy Commission (2006) (www.aplic.org). The holder shall assume the burden and expense of proving that pole designs deviating from those shown in the above publication provide effective electrocution and line-strike protection for birds. Such proof shall be provided by a subject-matter expert approved by the AO. The BLM reserves the right to require modifications or additions to all power line structures placed on this ROW, should they be necessary to ensure the safety of large birds. Such modifications and/or additions shall be made by the holder without liability or expense to the United States.
2. All activities shall comply with the approved "Natural Soda 2010 Mine Plan and Environmental Monitoring Plan".

COMPLIANCE WITH LAWS & CONFORMANCE WITH THE LAND USE PLAN

This decision is in compliance with the Endangered Species Act and the National Historic Preservation Act. It is also in conformance with the 1997 White River Record of Decision/Approved Resource Management Plan.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The BLM informed the public about this project by listing it on the online WRFO NEPA Register on 9/15/2014 and a copy of the completed Categorical Exclusion will be posted on the WRFO website.

RATIONALE

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 516 DM 11.9, Number F-8. This categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment. The Proposed Action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 43 CFR 46.215 apply.

ADMINISTRATIVE REMEDIES

Any appeal of this decision must follow the procedures set forth in 43 CFR Part 4. Within 30 days of the decision, a Notice of Appeal must be filed in the office of the Authorized Officer at White River Field Office, 220 East Market St., Meeker, CO 81641 with copies sent to the Regional Solicitor, Rocky Mountain Region, 755 Parfet St., Suite 151, Lakewood, CO 80215, and to the Department of the Interior, Board of Land Appeals, 801 North Quincy St., MS300-QC, Arlington, VA, 22203. If a statement of reasons for the appeal is not included with the notice, it must be filed with the Interior Board of Land Appeals at the above address within 30 days after the Notice of Appeal is filed with the Authorized Officer.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:



Field Manager

DATE SIGNED:

10/09/2014

